

● JULY 22, 2009

Surgeon Faces Probe of Research  
By **DAVID ARMSTRONG**

A top surgeon at the University of California, Los Angeles, has lost his position as executive director of its spine center and faces an investigation by the school into his research after allegedly failing to disclose he was being paid by several companies whose products he was studying.

Between 2002 and 2008, Jeffrey Wang repeatedly failed to report on forms filed with the state and with the medical school that he was receiving consulting payments, stock options and royalties from five companies on whose products he was conducting research, according to the university. The failure to report these relationships "violated university guidelines," the school said.

"UCLA regrets that in the case of Dr. Jeffrey Wang, associate professor of orthopedic surgery, a pattern of non-disclosure could have persisted without our knowledge," the school said in a statement. "We are committed to examining our processes to determine how, as an institution, we will prevent similar problems in the future."

Dr. Wang didn't return a telephone call to his office seeking comment. He remains on the school faculty. Dr. Wang was removed as co-executive director of the UCLA Comprehensive Spine Center. A university spokeswoman said the school is considering further sanctions against him.

UCLA has appointed a committee to investigate Dr. Wang's work and determine whether the payments affected his research and "if there are any mitigating actions needed to ensure the integrity of the research results."

UCLA alleges that Dr. Wang failed to disclose financial interests in connection with research projects sponsored by DePuy Spine Inc., a unit of [Johnson & Johnson](#), which paid Dr. Wang \$125,900 in royalty and consulting payments from 2002 through 2008; Facet Solutions Inc., a company in which Dr. Wang acquired options for 18,000 shares in 2004; Paradigm Spine LLC, an entity related to another company in which Dr. Wang received options for 20,000 shares; FzioMed Inc., which paid Dr. Wang \$144,000 from 2002 through 2008; and medical-device maker [Medtronic](#) Inc., which paid Dr. Wang \$275,000 in royalty and consulting payments from 2003 through 2008.

In the case of Medtronic, Dr. Wang did report some, but not all payments from the company, according to the school.

Most medical schools require doctors to report financial relationships and often have rules limiting how much they can receive from companies whose products are being studied. But medical schools often have difficulty verifying whether financial information filed by doctors is accurate. A handful of states, including Massachusetts and Minnesota, have instituted public-reporting requirements in which drug and medical-device companies must disclose payments to physicians for many kinds of services, including consulting.

Two U.S. senators, Republican Charles Grassley of Iowa and Democrat Herb Kohl of Wisconsin, are pushing for a federal law that would require companies to report payments to doctors of more than \$100. Some drug and device companies say they voluntarily will make payment information to doctors public during the next few years.

Write to David Armstrong at [david.armstrong@wsj.com](mailto:david.armstrong@wsj.com)